

#1376 Tell Stories, Not Myths: America is a Force But Not Always For Good

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall learn about some of these zany foreign misadventures the United States has bumbled its way into over the past hundred years. And by zany misadventures, I mean the naked pursuit of capitalism at any cost, the supportive military coups and other undemocratic overthrows of foreign governments, and wars for oil and resources and an unabashed attempt to keep America wealthy and the rest of the world less so, all while maintaining an anti-imperial, pro-democracy, pro-freedom, live and let live poker face.

Clips today are from *Intercepted* with Jeremy Scahill, *the Dig* from Jacobin radio, *Scene on Radio*, *Open Source* with Christopher Lydon, *Citations Needed*, and *Making Contact*.

The bipartisan empire machine that runs the United States - Intercepted with Jeremy Scahill - Air Date 9-26-18

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:00:50] When you strip down or strip away the buffoonery and the arrogance and the lies, and you look at the U.S. position in the world on foreign policy, Trump is basically in line with the political strategy of the empire politicians, of the elite. The world has long watched in horror as the United States has pursued its imperial march. Trump has made it OK to openly mock it. And while Trump does indeed, lie about anything and everything, he simultaneously engages in the big lies. The big lies that unite Democrats and Republicans.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: [00:01:30] That is why America will always choose independence and cooperation over global governance, control, and domination. I honor the right of every nation in this room to pursue its own customs, beliefs, and traditions. The United States will not tell you how to live, or work, or worship. We only ask that you honor our sovereignty in return.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:01:56] You see right there, this is a big lie. It's a lie that has been told throughout the history of the United States. The U.S. has never honored the right of nations to pursue their own customs and beliefs. The U.S. invades countries, sanctions them, bombs them, overthrows governments, interferes in elections, assassinates people across the globe. This nation was founded on violating the sovereignty of indigenous people, and then forcing enslaved Africans to build its infrastructure.

These are the lies that bind Trump to his predecessors. These are the permanent lies of the ruling elite of this country.

Empire Unhinged with Aslı Bâli & Aziz Rana - The Dig - Air Date 6-11-20

DANIEL DENVIR - HOST, THE DIG: [00:02:36] Let's step back, way back in time, because I think to understand the postwar order and then whatever sort of moment of transition we're in today, we should perhaps first explain how it grew out of the European age of empires that came before. You both write "At the dawn of the 20th century, elites who favored an aggressive American role abroad had long found themselves facing a basic dilemma. Policies ranging from participation in World War One, to engaging directly with European power politics, to establishing a permanent peacetime security infrastructure, all faced intense internal opposition and seem to contradict longstanding isolationist and antimilitarist sentiments. But," you continue, "defenders of greater international authority began against the backdrop of American militarism in the Philippines, the Americas, and especially during World War One to intertwine new foreign policy commitments with an account of the federal constitution in national identity."

Explain this transition that leads to this founding of what some called the American century, that from this conflict over naked overseas imperialism during the Spanish American War through the World War Two-era moral cloak for intervention that continued throughout the cold war.

AZIZ RANA: [00:03:59] Yeah. So I think the big thing here is that the US becomes a global power in the early 20th century at a very particular moment in global history, which is a time after all of the primary colonies in the global South have already been claimed. And when you're starting to see real anticolonial nationalists self-assertion by nonwhite communities.

And what one of the things that this means is that you have American elites that spent a lot of time in the context of, like, the Philippines during World War One, and sort of thinking about policies within the Western hemisphere, making arguments about, well, what distinguishes American power from traditional European empires? And so what justifies the US taking on an increasingly aggressive role globally? The thing that the presentation of European empires is they're essentially engaged in extractive projects, built around direct colonial dependencies. And what you have more and more foreign policy activists say in the US, and this is Wilson, but it'll also become like FDR and Roosevelt, is that, no, like the thing that defines American power is that American power is motivated by a basic principle of constitutionalism -- democratic self rule -- that links capitalist democracy. So a commitment to markets with a particular kind of state form that's organized around representative institutions and that is marked by self limitation constraint -- the rule of law. And because that's the thing that defines American power when the US projects power abroad, what it's really projecting is a principle of self-government and legal constraint that is fundamentally opposed to the idea of extractive empire and imperialism.

And so what ends up happening during these years is that American elites construct an account of American primacy that is grounded in notions of constitutionalism. And this is really significant because one of the things that comes to define legal scholarship, but American public opinion, by the time we get to the late 20th century, is this idea that well, the US can't be an empire because it doesn't have direct colonies. And also that constitutionalism and empire are somehow opposed categories, where in point of fact, the way in which the US constructed its own global hegemony and justified continuous intervention was precisely through an argument about the uniqueness of American power is grounded in promoting various forms of constitutionalism.

This is why I think the account of American exceptionalism is really key for underwriting all of this, because the claim in a way is that the US is the creator of these multilateral institutions that provide collective security, material prosperity globally, and that are grounded in mutual constraints. So that there all of these international legal limitations, the kind of violence or actions that states can take. But for the system to work, there has to be standing behind it somebody that is an enforcer. And so the US both sets the terms, is willing to be bound by them, but also is exceptional in the sense that at any point it's the country's responsibility to step outside these rules and ensure that the system is actually operating. And what that ends up producing during the cold war period is that it essentially reads threats anywhere globally (this is the thing that Oslo was emphasizing) as a threat to the system itself, requiring the US to respond. And oftentimes the claim is that, well, because the Soviet Union or various rivals are using forms of terror, the US has no choice, but to use counter-terror. And the thing that makes the US such a moral state is that it wrings its hands about the fact that it has to engage in this form of violence, just to be able to sustain the system. Or sometimes it's going to have to back authoritarian states, let's say like Suharto's Indonesia. But then the argument is these states are in a transitional mode. They're going from a traditional to a modern society. The U S over time is doing through market access various kinds of rule of law initiatives, is helping facilitate the transformations in the country. Now, all of this, I think, ends up being sold both at home and frankly to many folks in the global South, in part because it's still wedded to actual material benefits. This is where the point about the Soviet Union as a meaningful rival is really significant, because the Soviet Union is offering this example of a centrally-planned development, full economy, that was able to rapidly industrialize in a way that's not that different than what many countries in the global South are facing. The US actually has to provide development assistance, institutional meaningful concessions.

Like what is it that McNamara does when he leaves the US government in the context of the Vietnam war? He goes and he runs the World Bank. And what's the World Bank's major projects? Those are huge infrastructure development projects in the global South. And so the fact that you have that these actual material benefits gives a kind of legitimacy to the acts of violence. And it means that the way that the U S is operating, this is a point that Oslo made as well, is significantly through consent, as well as coercion. You get like the hard stick of illegal bombing campaigns in Laos and Cambodia and coups, but you also get buy-in through a system that's based on mutual limitation and through material goods that are being provided. This is the reason why the US is the dominant material provider for all of these international institutions. It's actually in the country's self-interest.

American Empire Part 1 - Scene on Radio - Air Date 4-29-20

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:09:52] And the third chapter is the globalist chapter.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:09:57] Nikhil is quick to add he's not using "globalist" as a dirty word, let alone as an anti-semitic dog whistle, as some people use it. He's all for thinking in global and cosmopolitan terms.

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:10:10] But there is a kind of globalism that was really about the construction of a system of control and force projection that was seen by U.S. planners as a

kind of a necessary structure for creating kind of insurance for the global economic system they wanted to design.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:10:34] In his newest work, Singh writes about the evolution of U.S foreign policy after World War II. In a 1947 address to Congress that's often considered the declaration of the Cold War, President Harry Truman announced what became known as the Truman Doctrine, also called the policy of containment toward the Soviet Union. In the first draft of the speech, Singh says, Truman made it clear that a driving motive behind the policy was the protection of global capitalism, which Truman essentially equated with democracy. His draft speech said, "If we permit free enterprise to disappear in other countries of the world, the very existence of our democracy will be gravely threatened." Truman's Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, said language like that made Truman's policy, "sound like an investment prospectus," and those lines were removed. In its final version, Truman's speech avoided direct talk of capitalism while using the words "free" and "freedom" a couple dozen times. But in a classified memo, a key architect of the Truman Doctrine was more straightforward. George Kennan, the diplomat best known for outlining the "containment" strategy, wrote in 1948 talking about the U.S.: "We have about fifty percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3-percent of its population." He went on:

GEORGE KENNAN: [00:12:03] In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our security. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:12:26] ... and world benefaction – wow, that's pretty blunt.

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:12:29] Yeah, it is blunt.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:12:31] Singh says, though Kennan was unsentimental, he was a moderate compared to some other men in top political and military positions at the time. Kennan acknowledges the U.S. has limited power and needs to consider the interests of other nations and their people.

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:12:48] And he's in some sense also not as rabid as some of those who actually want in that moment to go to war to kind of roll back communism in the Soviet Union. Containment in some ways is sort of framed as a kind of a middle-ground doctrine.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:13:09] But in his frank statement about the need to protect America's economic position, Kennan was expressing the consensus view in the U.S. government and of course among the nation's business leaders. To be fair, Nikhil says, the architects of U.S. policy argued that by helping to protect and revive capitalist growth in places like Europe and Japan, the U.S. would be helping others, too.

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:13:34] The United States is able to describe itself as kind of acting in an enlightened self-interest, and the enlightened self-interest being that by expanding the circuits of capital accumulation and industrial production you can actually produce greater wealth for everyone.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:13:57] This view becomes a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, rarely questioned across the mainstream political spectrum. Capitalist economics equals freedom, and an essential function of U.S. foreign policy is the protection of that particular kind of freedom by any means necessary—at least in the parts of the world the U.S. considers important.

Ghosts of Mossadegh: The Iran Cables, U.S. Empire, and the Arc of History - Intercepted with Jeremy Scahill - Air Date 11-20-19

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:14:22] In order to understand Iran's motivations in Iraq and elsewhere in the world, it's important to absorb the long arc of history that has created the Iran of 2019

Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson: Dwight D. Eisenhower, do solemnly swear—

PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER: [00:14:37] I, Dwight D. Eisenhower, do solemnly swear.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:14:41] January 20, 1953. General Dwight D. Eisenhower is sworn in as the 34th president of the United States.

PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER: [00:14:49] That I will faithfully execute the office of the president of the United States.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:14:54] It was just eight years after the official end of World War II and the global order that would become known as the Cold War was starting to heat up. Inside the United States a secretive and powerful new entity was being formed and its founders viewed themselves as the unseen Praetorian Guard of the burgeoning American empire. It went by the bland moniker of Central Intelligence Agency.

NEWSCASTER: [00:15:18] Signing the bill that will enable our national military establishment to do more coordinating and less pulling in opposite directions, President Truman uses a number of pens. These, in turn, are passed out as souvenirs to the witnesses, one of whom is the boss of the armed forces, Secretary of Defense Johnson.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:15:46] The men who oversaw the creation of the CIA were part of an elite class who obsessed about the growing power of their complicated ally in the war against the Nazis, the Soviet Union.

DEAN ACHESON: [00:15:57] It is not only the threat of direct military attack which must be considered but also that of conquest by default, by pressure, by persuasion, by subversion, by neutralism, by all the paraphernalia of indirect aggression which the communist movement has used.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:16:15] The world war in Europe had wet the appetite in Washington D.C. for U.S. military conquest across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Central to the ambitious project of empire was control of natural resources, oil.

NEWSCASTER: [00:16:31] Oil is found in only a few hills and valleys throughout the world, mainly in the United States, Canada and Mexico, in Peru and Venezuela, in the Balkans, along the Persian Gulf, and in the Dutch East Indies.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:16:46] Not just to ensure that the U.S. and its allies had unfettered access but also to keep the Soviets from controlling the countries which produced it.

The British, who had operated a massive colonial empire for centuries, were old hands at the game and Winston Churchill played an influential role in shaping Washington's intensifying foray into the geopolitical game. Even before Eisenhower took office, Churchill warned that there was a growing threat in the Persian Gulf. The democratic institutions in Iran had allowed the ascent to power of a problematic prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh.

He offered bold visions for social programs, land reform and higher taxes for foreign nations and companies doing business in Iran. There were fears that, despite Mossadegh's statements to the contrary, Iran could be effectively pulled into the grasp of its massive neighbor, the Soviet Union. But what was most alarming to Churchill was the oil. Mossadegh announced a policy of nationalization of the oil industry, which for forty years had been built up and run by the British.

NEWSCASTER: [00:17:58] Their mission fruitless, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Delegation led by Mr. Jackson returns to London as Persia gives the company's employees one week to decide whether to stay and work for Persia.

INTERVIEWEE: [00:18:09] The government is an extremist government and it not admit anything but a full surrender of all our rights.

NEWSCASTER: [00:18:16] Faced with such a position, the delegates realized there was nothing more they could do.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:18:22] On May 1, 1952, Mossadegh had ordered the seizure of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In explaining his policy to appropriate British oil interests in Iran, Mossadegh said: "With the oil revenues, we could meet our entire budget and combat poverty, disease, and backwardness among our people." By eliminating the British oil company, Mossadegh argued that "We would also eliminate corruption and intrigue, by means of which the internal affairs of our country have been influenced. Once this tutelage has ceased," Mossadegh said. "Iran will have achieved its economic and political independence."

NEWSCASTER: [00:19:00] Serious trouble in Tehran, capital of oil-rich Iran, its pro-Western ruler Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi has lost his throne, temporarily at least. When his army failed to oust the dictatorial minded Premier Mossadegh, the Shah himself was forced to flee for his life to neighboring Baghdad. Another king without a country.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:19:24] This sent shockwaves through the corridors of power in Britain. Eisenhower's predecessor, Harry S. Truman, was reluctant to directly involve the United States in regime change in Iran. But Eisenhower welcomed the pressure from Churchill. In March of 1953, Eisenhower authorized the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency to begin initiating the overthrow of Mossadegh's government. His

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles would work with his younger brother Allan Dulles, the head of the CIA, to accomplish this task. And thus Operation Ajax was born.

NEWSCASTER: [00:20:00] In Rome where he had fled, 33-year-old Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi hears astounding news, royalist forces have revolted, arrested Dr. Mossadegh and want their sovereign home. Army men are given principal credit for the sensational change. When the army turned against its Mossadegh-appointed officers, it assured the return of the king.

JEREMY SCAHILL - HOST, INTERCEPTED: [00:20:25] The CIA worked with monarchists, the Shah and at times directed factions of the Iranian military. After propaganda operations and internal politicking among the Iranian elite, a rogue Iranian military contingent—operating on orders from a top CIA officer—rolled tanks into Tehran and shelled Mossadegh's residence. The prime minister managed to escape, but his time in office was finished. Mossadegh was forced to resign. He was later imprisoned for three years in solitary confinement after a sham trial and he lived out the rest of his years in obscurity and under house arrest before dying in 1967.

It was the events of this coup and the overthrow of Mossadegh that would ultimately give rise to the Islamic revolution in Iran, the seizing of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 and the ensuing decades of American hegemony and war in and around Iran.

2020 Hindsight on Iraq - Open Source with Christopher Lydon - Air Date 1-9-20

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:21:27] Those of us who -- I'm from Iran -- whether we know this through personal experience or our family experience or we heard this from our parents or grandparents, we remember 1953, the coup d'etat against Premier Mossadegh. This was a time of intense American anti-communism, and he was taken out on the flimsy charge of probably trying to bring communism to Iran. But, in fact, he was not a communist; he had very bad relationship with the Tudeh Party, the communist party of Iran.

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:21:58] He was taken out, we must emphasize, by the CIA, "Kim" Roosevelt leading the charge . . .

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:22:02] . . . right . . .

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:22:03] . . . spreading hundred dollar bills all over Tehran until he quit

quite so. And at the time it wasn't really known that the United States that the CIA was behind this. Everyone knew the role of Britain, but, that was very, very upset with the nationalization of the oil industry and so on. But that came to light some years afterwards, and it's been a very unfortunate thing. And I think many Iranians have been very, very skeptical of the United States and very suspicious of the United States ever since then, but there've been other things along the way as well.

The worst part is that it's been lost to history. Nobody ever mentions that the original sin in our policy in the Middle East was toppling a very promising democratic postwar regime.

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:22:45] And we'll never forget it. We can never forget it. I often,

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:22:48] How do we suppress it? I don't know. Do you, Steve Walt, how we get that out of our memory that . . . talk about blood on the hands. I mean, we created -- we opposed the Shah and his SAVAK and a whole lot of bad economics on the people and for 25 years until the Islamic revolution. And now Trump talks about the blood on their hands as if we are children . . .

STEPHEN WALT: [00:23:13] Well, all countries and this one in particular are bad at remembering our own history. We tell ourselves a rather whitewashed view of our own past conduct. So, an event like the '53 coup, which looms very large in the minds of Iranians, is one that's a footnote in American history at this point. And that's true of many things that have had happened subsequently.

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:23:33] I didn't want to interrupt Valentina and specifically on this question of the entrenched behavior of which that was the kind of model. When I worry about the late imperial phase of our own glorious history, you were saying about us . . .

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:23:49] . . . and who can forget that the US practically gave Saddam Hussein the green light to invade Iran in 1980, starting a bloody eight-year war. It just so happens, by the way that, I mean, people are wondering these days why it is that Iran and Syria have such good relations. Well, during the Iran-Iraq War, Syria was among -- I don't know, what -- two or three countries that supported Iran during that war, and every other country was opposed to it. It was a bloody war . . .

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:24:19] [overlapping] again, blood on hands, a million casualties . .

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:24:21] . . . A million casualties

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:24:23] vast numbers of women and children

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:24:25] Absolutely. The destruction. I mean, my late father lived there and he would be calling and writing us from time to time and telling us about the aircraft going overhead, and so on. And the destruction of the means of production of both countries, and the bombardments and so on. I mean, it was quite awful; it was quite atrocious. And then, I would actually like to bring in another factor here in terms of the US and its rather nefarious role in the region broadly speaking, and that's Afghanistan and its role during the Afghan War.

CHRISTOPHER LYDON - HOST, OPEN SOURCE: [00:24:56] Then, we're starting in 1902, no, '01.

Oh no. I would go back to 1979-80. Right? So, the Afghan War. So there was a revolution that took place in 1978. And again, American virulent anti-communism decided that that regime had to go as well. And it worked through -- the United States worked through its proxies, in particular Pakistan and also Saudi Arabia, to foment an Islamist armed rebellion. I mean, the

US was on the side of a group of tribal Islamist rebels, later called the Mujahideen, who were opposed to girls' schooling.

including Bin Laden, probably

VALENTINE MOGHADAM: [00:25:40] Well, Bin Laden was trained in a CIA camp along the border with Pakistan. And so that was the origin of Al Qaeda. So, the United States has played a very, very, nasty role. I often, I often sit and wonder what Iran and actually the region would look like had the 1953 coup d'etat not occurred.

I often wonder what Afghanistan and the rest of the region would look like, too, had the United States decided to leave Afghanistan alone in 1978, 1979, 1980, let it deal with its rebels, the tribal Islamists uprising. And, at the very worst, Afghanistan would have been -- Oh, I don't know -- another Uzbekistan or Tajikistan or one of the other -stans, but it would not have been the essentially failed state that it still is today. So, the 1980s, and then of course the invasion in 2001, and then with the resurgence of the Taliban in 2006, it's just been one bit of bad news after the other. So, I feel very, very badly about Afghanistan. I was there in January-February of 1989 when the modernizing, progressive government was still in place, but it was besieged. The Soviet troops were leaving, and it took another two years, and finally, what was to my mind, a very, very, interesting experiment, collapsed. It failed.

American Empire Part 2 - Scene on Radio - Air Date 4-29-20

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:27:05] In fact, these days, the U.S. does not seize oil directly as the spoils of war though Trump has said maybe it should have done so in Iraq. But keeping oil-rich countries in the hands of friendly governments allows U.S. oil companies to do business there and keep the cheap energy flowing to the U.S. economy. Prominent U.S. officials not known as critics of the country's foreign policy have said yes, oil was a central reason for the Iraq War, including Chuck Hagel, the former Republican U.S. Senator and defense secretary in the Obama Administration who said, "we're not there for figs," and General John Abizaid, a former U.S. Commander in Iraq, who said in 2007: "Of course it's about oil; we can't really deny that."

Also hard to deny is that American leaders, more than those of any other country on the planet, feel justified in exerting power in and on other countries without asking permission. They claim the right to alter and to take the lives of people in those lands. Nikhil Singh says the United States is the world's last true empire. It just doesn't see itself as such.

NIKHIL SINGH: [00:28:28] We have not yet figured out what it would mean to think differently about how we interact with the world, how we become a good neighbor with the world, how we live in the world as another people among peoples, right, not a people invested in maintaining relationships of disparity, as Kennan put it, people interested in actually thinking about how we coexist on a finite and fragile planet.

Voting Is Not Enough - 2 WEEKS LEFT, GET OUT THE VOTE - Best of the Left

AMANDA - ACTIVISM, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:29:10] You've reached the activism portion of today's show. Today's activism—voting is not enough. Get out the vote. It's crunch time, folks. There are less than 2 weeks until election day. Just 13 days.

And, yes, there is some positive news floating around regarding polling and fundraising...but, you know what?

Ignore it.

Dig deep and remember way, way, waaay back to 2016 when all that good pre-election news did not stop Trump from winning. Remember that every single day the GOP is working at the local level and through the courts to suppress votes. Remember that they may get their Supreme Court nominee through in time for the court to call a close election in favor of Trump. Remember that the right has been spending billions pushing a massive disinformation campaign to help reelect Trump and he has personally invited his supporters to practice voter intimidation at the polls. And beyond all of that, you should know that Republicans are now saying they are hopeful because they've seen a spike in Republican voter registrations in key states like Florida, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. In fact, they are calling these registrations their "secret weapon."

So DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT get complacent. Getting Trump out is still a major uphill battle and right now - the the last two weeks before the election - we need all hands on deck. If you haven't made volunteering a priority yet, please, please, please do it now. Even a couple hours a week can make a big difference.

There are many volunteer opportunities out there, but today we're just going to re-highlight a few of the big ones. To see a longer list of volunteering opportunities, and much more, visit our Voting Is Not Enough 2020 Election Action Guide at BestoftheLeft.com/2020action.

First, you can volunteer from anywhere with Swing Left and help them continue implementing their Super State Strategy. This strategy focuses on 12 states that are each critical to the flipping the White House, the Senate and the state houses key to rolling back Republican gerrymandering. Go to TheLastWeekends.org to instantly find and sign up for phonebank and textbank shifts during the final two weekends before the election.

In addition to volunteering, SwingLeft also lets you donate strategically. The Swing Left Immediate Impact Fund sends your donations to the candidates in the closest races among the Super States, or you can choose a Super State and your donations will support races up and down the ballot in that state. Go to SwingLeft.org/funds to donate.

Next, you could get involved with Field Team 6 - a west coast-based get out the vote organization that strategically partners with over 100 state and national organizations to make the most impact. With multiple, remote phone banking and text banking events and trainings held every single day of the week, there is just no excuse not to get involved.

Head to fieldteamsix.org - that's field team and the number six - .org slash actions [fieldteamsix.org/actions] to check their Calendar of Events and sign up for a shift. If you're not on the west coast, just a note that Field Team 6 lists the Pacific time first for all events, so adjust accordingly.

And finally, there is Vote Save America, the get out the vote effort from Crooked Media, which allows you to volunteer from anywhere in six key battleground states. You can also Adopt a State and receive updates on everything you need to know to support the work of organizers and volunteers in that state. Go to VoteSaveAmerica.com to learn more.

Voting is already underway, so if you or someone you know encounters a problem with ballot drop boxes, early voting, absentee ballots, or something else, remember that help is available. Call Election Protection at 866-OUR-VOTE or visit 866OurVote.org. If you want to help voters, sign up to assist with Election Protection's nonpartisan poll monitoring program at ProtectTheVote.net.

The segment notes include all the links to this information as well as additional resources, and, once again, this segment is available on the "Voting is Not Enough" page at BestoftheLeft.com/2020action.

So if building massive voter turnout that categorically throws Trump out of office is important to you, be sure to tell everyone, you know about Voting Is Not Enough. Get out the vote so that others in your network can spread the word too.

American Empire Part 3 - Scene on Radio - Air Date

4-29-20

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:33:11] Leader of the free world, There's a lot of things that I could say about that phrase. But what I think what this episode has illustrated is that calling ourselves that has allowed the U.S. to give itself the right to intervene in other countries without the consent of those countries or their people. Which is clearly anti-democratic.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:33:34] Yes. And the scale of the interventions is mind-boggling. A couple of facts I came across recently: depending on what you count as a war, the U.S. has been at war somewhere for more than ninety percent of its history -- 227 out of 244 years. And one expert found the U.S. military has put boots on the ground in every country in the world except three.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:34:01] Okay.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:34:01] Are you ready? Andorra, Bhutan, and Liechtenstein.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:34:06] Wow. Those are... mm.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:34:08] So, If we were gonna start to list the U.S. military interventions, even just since World War Two, you know, we'd, actually, we don't have time for that.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:34:20] I feel like this is our podcast. We should probably just mention one or two just to give people a sense of it.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:34:26] Yeah, well, okay. Right, so, I mean, right at the end of world war two the occupation of Japan starting in 1945.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:34:33] And in 1946 the School of America's opened in Panama.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:34:40] And then 1950, of course, you have the Korean War, big deal that lasts until 53 53, by the way, that was the year that, the U.S. orchestrated a coup in Iran restoring the shah over the democratically elected Prime Minister.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:34:57] The U.S. kind of supported a coup in Guatemala in 1954 and then there was more military intervention in 1960, in Guatemala. So that's – those – yeah that's a few things right there.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:35:09] That's just a taste, right? But then you know, '61 you have the Bay of Pigs, it's hard not to mention that.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:35:16] Yeah, and if you're gonna talk about '61 I think we should also talk about the CIA supporting the assassination of the prime minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:35:27] And then in '73 you had the coup in Chile against Allende.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:35:34] Yeah and while we're in the 70s, in '75 you had the U.S. support for Indonesia's invasion of East Timor.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:35:40] And then you get into the 80s with the actions in Central America, El Salvador and supporting the contras against the government in Nicaragua.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:35:51] Yeah, Grenada in 1983.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:35:54] Oh, that little Grenada war, yeah. That kind of gets us through the 80s and that gives a flavor of the period.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:36:01] I mean, There was Somalia in 1992 too.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:36:04] Right? Well, and then two Wars in Iraq, the Gulf war in 1990. And of course the Iraq war in 2003,

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:36:13] Should probably mention Afghanistan in 2001.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:36:15] Yes, which is still going on, and also right up to today, pretty much, support for the Saudi bombing in Yemen that started in 2015.

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:36:26] That list which is longer than we bargained for is still not an exhaustive list, but folks should definitely look those up if they're not familiar. And I think that you think about this sort of massive scale of military intervention. It brings us back to those two justifications that you mentioned at the top of the episode, which were, number one, this idea that all of this is in our national interest, and secondly, that we're doing more good than harm in the world.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:36:58] Yeah, let's look at these one at a time. First, what does it mean to say that these actions have been in "our" interest. Who is that "we?"

CHENJERAI KUMANYIKA: [00:37:08] You know, John, we could go on and on about how words like "we" and the "our" in our national interest are used to discourage us from seeing severely conflicting interests in national policy. I mean saying "our national interests" signals to ordinary folks that this business of empire benefits everyone inside the thing called the nation.

JOHN BIEWEN - HOST, SCENE ON RADIO: [00:37:29] But what we see is that we've had decades of endless war overseas, and especially in the last few decades, here at home the rich get much richer, and half the country can barely survive week-to-week. So, how is that national interest thing really working out for everybody?

The Always Stumbling US Empire - Citations Needed - Air Date 10-25-17

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:37:51] The media does a lot of mind reading when it discusses US foreign policy. It violates a lot of journalistic standards of both objectivity and giving more than one can say. And you see this a lot with how us foreign policy is framed; typically it's done in what we generally call the kind of good faith manner that the U S. is inherently good. And when we'd escalate wars, we are stumbling or bumbling or falling backwards into them. It is never a deliberate policy.

ARCHIVAL AUDIO: [00:38:17] But simply the U S is stumbling its way into another decade of war.

We are sliding toward war.

The North Koreans to make sure that we don't get into an accidental war.

The risk of sliding into war with Iran.

We must not sleep walk our way into war.

I think many of us are worried that we are going to stumble into war.

Its military says Iran's latest actions could draw America into war.

We've been complaining about stumbling into war in 2003 for a decade now.

Then do what we did during the Bush administration, which was stumble into war .

Suggesting that we slid into war and suggesting that the possibilities of sliding into war are present today.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:38:59] And this is very common. This is just audio clips from TV. It's also prevalent, if not ubiquitous, in print.

With the US be drawn further into the Syrian war? sks Fox news. How America could stumble into war with Iran, disclosed the Atlantic. What it would take to pull the US into war in Asia, speculated Quartz. Trump could easily just be sucked into war in Afghanistan again, Slate predicted. The US is stumbling into a wider war in Syria, the New York Times editorial board. A flexing contest in Syria may trap the US and endless conflict, Vice added. Wars have a way of escalating in the US may "stumble into a ruinous war in North Korea," Foreign Policy writes. Is the U S blundering towards a ruinous war? one CNN anchor asked Trump is stumbling into war with North Korea, the Boston Globe Warns. The US has gotten dragged into war in Yemen, Foreign Policy editors insists. And these are all by the way, just in the last few weeks.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:39:48] We're so hapless.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:39:49] I know. And could Donald Trump stumble into nuclear war? New York magazine asks.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:39:53] This past August, analysis published in the Washington Post pushed the headline, "We won't go to war with North Korea on purpose, but we might by accident." In addition to citing historical examples of the Cuban missile crisis and the Korean War, the author of the piece, professor Mitchell Lerner, who runs Ohio State's Institute for Korean Studies, writes, "The American role in the Vietnam War exploded after the alleged second Gulf of Tonkin attack on August 4th, 1964. We now know that this attack never occurred, but American military and political leaders believed that it had, and president Lyndon Johnson used it as an excuse to obtain the functional equivalent of a declaration of war." The article continues, "In neither of these cases were the critical decisions for war made as part of a sober and thorough assessment of accurate evidence, and yet war came nonetheless."

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:40:47] And it has a tendency to do that.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:40:49] Yeah. As you can see, beyond the passive use of the phrase, war came nonetheless, as though it was suddenly appeared like a summer rain shower, Lerner also absolves the United States of deliberately deciding to escalate its own already aggressive actions in North Vietnam. It was already supporting the South Vietnamese kind of puppet government in their own attacks on North Vietnam. And then it was deliberately looking for a way to escalate that and used this, so-called second Gulf of Tonkin attack, which never occurred. But at the time American leadership wasn't even positive anything had actually happened. President Johnson was told that an attack on a U S destroyer called the Turner Joy was "probable, but not certain." Which is hardly an authoritative analysis, by which to push a resolution for war through Congress. But the fact of the matter is that LBJ and his top cabinet secretaries had already written a war resolution and just were waiting for the right time to get it passed.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:41:48] They were not just bumbling around and this happened and they reacted. Oh, look, they were looking for a pretext. One came, they deliberately ignored evidence to the contrary. Right. Exactly. And that shows malice that shows not an accident or bumbling into war; that shows that you wanted war.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:42:00] Exactly. The, the idea that it was only years and years, decades later, that the truth came out that there had been actually no

second attack by the North Vietnamese Navy on these U S warships, that was actually speculated on at the time. I mean, I. F. Stone, the journalist, was already saying , questioning the official story. A number of senators voted against the resolution, actually only two, against the Tonkin Gulf resolution, as it was known, that kind of gave LBJ carte blanche to just launch this ground war. But I mean, questions were there.

So the idea that it took decades and that no one knew, and that this was all done on the up and up, right? Like with good faith that they thought they were doing the right thing...

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:42:42] ...has been pretty much disproved.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:42:44] It is completely disproven.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:42:45] And you see this with even today with, with straight reporting in Syria.

So the New York Times back in July, was doing a straight reporting on the escalation of the war there, the US "was inadvertently sliding" and "sleepwalking to war." And that the reason they were doing so is because they "were running out of space to stay out of Mr. Assad's way." So they weren't increasing their bombing of Iranian proxies and soldiers and drones because they wanted to attack Iranian soldiers, proxies and drones. They did it because they had literally nowhere else to go.

They had

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:43:12] nowhere else to go. They were pushed into a corner and all all they could do is just launch militaryis all.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:43:17] And so the U S has always painted as stumbling around, sliding, slipping, sleepwalking, inadvertently into war.

And when it's not incompetent, it is of course benevolent. As we discussed in episode eight, the framing of the US as benevolent is very common. So we're going to read some quotes that stress this. So "Initially motivated by humanitarian impulses, foreign policies," Emile Simpson insisted, "the United States and its Western allies achieved regime change in Libya and attempted it in Syria by backing rebels in each case.

"At least in recent decades, American presidents who took military action have been driven by a desire to promote freedom and democracy," the New York Times editorial board added.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:43:53] That one's amazing.

This kind of talking point kind of works like a revolving door. It's spouted by by government officials. It's then regurgitated back by the press and then repeated again by the government. So it's like this cycle where it's just constantly getting reinforced. Take for instance, comments from the US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley last month before the UN security council.

NIKKI HALEY - U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: [00:44:15] The members of the Security Council, I must say enough is enough. We have taken an incremental approach and despite the best of intentions it has not worked.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:44:26] And then, later in that same speech:

NIKKI HALEY - U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: [00:44:29] Kim Jong-Un's action can not be seen as defensive. He wants to be acknowledged as a nuclear power. But being a nuclear power is not about using those terrible weapons to threaten others. Nuclear powers understand their responsibilities.

Kim Jong-Un shows no such understanding. His abusive use of missiles and his nuclear threats show that he is begging for war. War is never something the United States wants. We don't want it now. But our country's patience is not unlimited.

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:45:05] Clearly we see an example there of both the best of intentions trope, as well as the United States being this very reluctant military state that it doesn't, it doesn't want war.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:45:18] It's just DC. It's a DC dogma. Right? Which is something we've talked about before that the US operates both benevolently or incompetently, but never incompetently or maliciously. And never both, never both malicious and competent, just God forbid, we were both good at what we did...

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:45:31] and wanted to do horrible things.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:45:32] There's 600 some odd military bases just appeared out of nowhere. And we became the most powerful country in the history of the earth by accident.

And this is something also that goes back to history. LBJ spoke in the same terms that Nikki Haley did, which is again, while we were practicing a covert and more overt war in Indochina and about three or four different countries, Johnson had a similar appeal.

This is his famous Gulf of Tonkin speech.

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON: [00:45:56] In the larger sense, this new act of aggression aimed directly at our own forces, again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of the struggle for peace and security in Southeast Asia. Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Vietnam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas, against the United States of America. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risk of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:46:47] Every American president, since at least the 1970s, Washington Post Phillip Rucker declared earlier this year, "has used his office to champion human rights and democratic values around the world." So you can interpret US policymakers' intentions in only one direction. And that is towards benevolence or good faith. You're never allowed to assume malice. So there's something going on here that I want to talk about.

What we have is a kind of mind reading exercise. Journalists are not describing an objective thing that happened. They're not saying US escalates war in Syria. They're not saying Trump's rhetoric escalates war in North Korea, which is sort of an objective thing you can define. It's by escalating rhetoric, US risks stumbling into war by their sleepwalking, in the words here.

These are all highly subjective value claims that require a theory of mind as to what the US policymakers are thinking. That is really uncalled for in is really out of whack with most standard journalistic practices, which is, you're not really supposed to assume the intentions either way.

Now the other side of the coin is okay, well, we don't want to assume that they're evil, that they have this master conspiracy plan, you're not allowed to do that. You're not allowed to say that there's some broader objective of the middle East, whether it's getting rid of governments that are a threat to US hegemony, regardless of

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:48:00] That would out the game.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: [00:48:02] So they will help, but you can do the other direction. Cause like, if I was to say the US has designs in the middle East to get rid of countries, whether it's the Wesley Clark seven countries on the hit list or whether it's countries that are threatening US hegemony, I'd be called a wacky conspiracy theorist.

You can do, you can do the opposite, which is they are actually just a bunch of bumbling idiots who either, again, don't know what they're doing, or when they do know what they're doing, they really really mean well.

The Other 9/11: Part One - Making Contact - Air Date 9-3-13

GEORGE LAVENDER - HOST, MAKING CONTACT: [00:48:26] As the destabilization campaign and Chile mounted through 1972 into 1973, U.S. Officials publicly denied any involvement.

HOST - MAKING CONTACT: [00:48:35] In 1974, then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger testified before the U S Congress.

ARCHIVAL AUDIO: [00:48:42] Our concern was not at all with a coup in 1973, about which we knew nothing, and with which we had nothing to do, as I testified to in 1973, and as the president reaffirmed.

HOST - MAKING CONTACT: [00:48:54] Investigations by the U.S. Congress would reveal quite a different story, as proof of the U.S. complicity and financing of the bloody coup emerged. The Nixon administration financed paramilitary groups, opposition parties, and the press in a campaign to destabilize the economy and the government. The U.S. military armed and advised the conspirators in the Chilean armed forces who would lead the coup against the democratically elected government. Senator Frank Church, in congressional hearings on September 19th, 1974, questioned Henry Kissinger.

SENATOR FRANK CHURCH: [00:49:32] I would like the secretary to tell me how we could reconcile this kind of an intervention with the moral law that we supposed to respect with treaty law, with international law, or with any law other than the law of the jungle.

HENRY KISSINGER - SECRETARY OF STATE: [00:49:45] All of the matters to which you refer have been approved by the president and briefed to the appropriate committees. This doesn't make them right. I'm just trying to add...

SENATOR FRANK CHURCH: [00:49:55] It makes it all the more appalling to me, Mr. Secretary.

ISABEL ALLENDE: [00:49:58] Now, what was the threat? The nationalization of the copper mines, that Allende did anyway, according to Nixon and Kissinger, it was that Cuba was there and the Caribbean and Chile was in the South and they were going to get together and have this big hamburger with a lot of ketchup.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON: [00:50:26] If Allende should win the election in Chile...

HOST - MAKING CONTACT: [00:50:30] Former US President Richard Nixon speaking in 1977.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON: [00:50:35] ...and then you have Castro in Cuba. What you will in effect have in Latin America is a red sandwich, and eventually it'll all be red.

ARIEL DORFMAN: [00:50:51] I think that Chile was a model for the world in some sense. And if we had been successful, this would have been a form of change, profoundly social changes of democratic nature, justice, economic sovereignty, and national liberation.

RENE CASTRO: [00:51:12] This problem was the problem that Nixon and Kissinger faced. Can we allow this to happen? Obviously not. So immediately after Allende was elected they put a red flag that said we can't permit this to happen.

HOST - MAKING CONTACT: [00:51:29] Citing the words of Thomas Jefferson, President Salvador Allende warned the United Nations about transnational corporations and their intervention into world political affairs.

CHILEAN PRESIDENT SALVADOR ALLENDE: [00:51:43] Imperialism and its cruelties have had a long and ominous history in Latin America. We are witnessing a pitched battle between the sovereign states and the giant transnational corporations. We are under external attack by forces which aimed to prevent the inauguration of a freely elected government and have attempted to overthrow it ever since.

RENE CASTRO: [00:52:08] The punishment for Chile was a really particular one from the State Department. We all know the Kissinger was particularly involved in the Chilean case.

ARCHIVAL AUDIO: [00:52:18] The age old antagonism between freedom and tyranny is concerned. We are not neutral.

RENE CASTRO: [00:52:24] So it was a clear message. Any attempt to elect a leftist, it will happen—something like happened in Chile.

ARIEL DORFMAN: [00:52:31] And so I think it was strategically important for them to destroy Allende and destroy him, not in a democratic election because they could have waited a few years, instead they decided to carry out an exemplary, bloody, a very pain wracking form of a repressive society. Then they brought into bearing the shock therapy form, which was the neoliberal form of economic policies in Latin America.

ISABEL ALLENDE: [00:53:01] And then in 24 hours, we had order. The order of a military camp. The non-creative stark order. To give you an example I would have to think of a wall. A wall that before was painted with the creative murals of the leftist youth and the next day it was whitewashed with a soldier standing in front. So that is for me the image of the before and after.

Empire Unhinged with Aslı Bâli & Aziz Rana Part 2 - The Dig - Air Date 6-11-20

DANIEL DENVIR - HOST, THE DIG: [00:53:30] The cold war's end gave the impression that, or confirmed to many, that history had an arc. These increasingly universal waves of democratization, globally, but also within the United States, which was, as the story went, always becoming this more perfect union. And the inevitability of all of that seemed confirmed by the Soviet Union's collapse.

Why did the apotheosis of American power in the 1990s also turn out to be the beginning of a crisis in American power? What was it about this dog-catching-the-car moment, when with the Soviet Union vanquished, Bush proclaimed the new world order and initiated NAFTA negotiations, but suddenly Americans found their government and the prospect of world government, and really the entire world outside of our borders, so terrifying?

ASLI BÂLI: [00:54:22] I mean, I would start by saying that the account that we just gave of what the context was for the presentation of multilateralism by the United States and the investment by the United States in multilateralism for domestic audiences and internationally had to do crucially with this rivalry with the Soviet Union. So multi-lateralism wasn't just a means of accomplishing US interests, wasn't another sort of tool in the foreign policy toolkit. It was the legitimating frame that expressed the superiority of the model that the United States presented to its chief rival.

When that rival is removed, the necessity of that framework also begins to frame. The idea that the United States needs to be deeply committed to a global peace dividend, for example, at the end of the cold war, in which there should not only be a redistribution domestically, that arises from that reduced need for military and so on that's presumed with the end of the Soviet Union, but also that it should have an international dividend, that there should be some ways in which there's broader multilateral investment, is something that would be a normal and it would have been a natural extension of the kinds of legitimating claims made in the name of multilateralism in the seventies and eighties. But in the 1990s, it's a real problem to offer that presentation, to justify to domestic audiences, why it is that the United States should be spending money on overseas lending. And in this moment, in this period, you have an ascendant Republican party that begins to directly question these ideas, particularly in the wake of the first Bush administration, the George H.W. Bush administration, with the rise of Clinton, and demand through Congress, a sort of withdrawal from international organizations and international institutions.

So Jesse Holmes famously leads the charge against the United Nations. The United States basically began suspending its budgetary contributions to many of these organizations. So the very things that required the United States to be the principle sort of backstop, militarily, and economically, for a multilateral order, that presented itself as providing the goods that Aziz described a moment ago, is no longer presumptively necessary in the same way and becomes open to a set of domestic arguments internally. But also you had a moment, the high watermark of sort of internationalism if you want, in the sort of military expression of US power was the Gulf war, was the first 1991 Gulf war, where the United States gets the backing of the Security Council, engages in coalition action, and then accomplishes its ends and places Iraq under a punitive sanctions regime.

And that was the moment of the new world order. That's the moment when George H.W. Bush proclaims actually, interestingly, in September 11th, 1991, I believe it is, that he makes this proclamation and of course...

DANIEL DENVIR - HOST, THE DIG: [00:57:13] In an address to Congress, right?

ASLI BÂLI: [00:57:14] In an address a Congress. Exactly. So it's after the end of the war. So it's 1991, the new world order. And then shortly thereafter, Bush himself, and the vision that he was articulating, is defeated internally, electorally. And then you get the period that Aziz and I write about in this essay, which is the arrival of the Clinton administration and the beginning of a series of defections. And those defections take the form of an increasing willingness on the part of the United States to begin with, to set aside the preferences or interests of other States in the international system and act unilaterally, not necessarily through the multilateral institutions that it had set up, and not in the name of the multilateral order or rule-based order that it had authored. So you have this take the form of, first of all, a reluctance to sign on to new international institutions.

So what do you have at the end of the 1990s that emerges you have the international criminal court. You have the Kyoto accord. The United States wants to be at the table shaping the nature of these institutions. But at the end of the day, it's not prepared to actually engage in the constraint necessary to participate in them.

At the same time you have the United States basically asserting authority to intervene militarily in order to reshape in the name of different kinds of principles. So in the 1990s, it's humanitarianism. Shortly thereafter, it's succeeded by counterterrorism. But a set of prerogatives that require it not to travel through the UN Security Council process or multilateral institutions, but to establish ad hoc coalitions of interest and like-minded States acting together to reshape the terms of the underlying architecture of the international system in ways that are more beneficial to their own interests with much less regard for whether or not this is going to command consent in the remainder of the world, in part because there isn't a viable alternative. So the very logic of the end of history or the combination and arc that you're describing itself underwrites an account that says there's an inevitability and a natural reality to American hegemony that no longer requires the kind of defense that was presented through multilateral order in an earlier rivalrous geopolitics.

And so this again is a reminder that the American century, so-called American century, for a large chunk of the 20th century was one that was not at all about unipolarity. And once it becomes a unipolar order, it actually changes its character in some very important ways.

AZIZ RANA: [00:59:39] You know, I think that the point that Asli's making it is like really important, because in part it also helps explain why, if you were to talk to the Clintons or Bush Jr., they would not see themselves as defecting from the postwar order. They would see themselves as the folks that are really the protectors, champions of that order in various ways. And the reason why is because they're essentially emphasizing the centrality of American exceptionalism, the idea that it's the US that undergirds all of these institutions, and it's appropriate, therefore, in the context of humanitarian intervention, or even in the context of the Iraq war, for the US at times to step outside of its own imposed self-constraint as a way of ensuring collective security.

But the problem here is that in a way they're doubling down on one element of the cold war politics, but without the other element, that was really key, which is precisely because the cold war era was a bipolar era, there were these external constraints that limited the willingness of the US to engage in just absolute unilateralism.

And once those constraints are removed, and there's really no external limitations on the US's willingness to engage in unilateralism, the continuous resort to unilateralism itself ends up undermining the order. That makes sense. So, on the one hand, Clinton can think of himself, and Hillary Clinton as well, as defenders of the postwar system, but without the structure of bipolarity, the continual resort to the US as the exceptional nation actually ends up undermining it.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:01:18] We've just clips today, starting with Jeremy Scahill from *Intercepted* explaining the great live and let live lie of the United States. *The Dig* discussed to the United States' role in creating and maintaining international institutions. *Scene on Radio* showed that the containment strategy against the Soviet Union basically stemmed out of a conflation between capitalism and democracy. *Intercepted* told the history of Iran and the United States' role in overthrowing their legitimate government—something that we don't tend to remember, but of course the Iranians never forget. *Scene on Radio* touched on the mostly unspoken but obvious truth that the U.S. goes to war for oil. They also summarized a long list of wars we've been involved in over the past century. And *Citations Needed* broke down media framing of U.S. foreign policy, which basically describes us as the dumbest bull in a China shop of the world has ever known because at least that's better than taking any responsibility for our actions.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard three bonus clips, including *Open Source* with Christopher Lydon, with additional details on the legacy of the U.S. backed overthrow in Iran. *Making Contact*, featured a documentary on yet another U.S. backed coup, this one in Chile. And *the Dig* had more discussion on the role of the U.S. once it was unchallenged in the world after the fall of the Soviet Union. For non-members, those bonus clips are linked in the show notes, and they're part of the transcript for today's show, so you can still find it if you make the effort, but to hear that and all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into your podcast feed, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership because we don't allow a lack of funds to be a barrier to hearing more information, and so every request is granted—no questions asked.

And now, we'll hear from you.

Domestic focus is about setting a good example - Chris from San Diego

VOICEMAILER: CHRIS FROM SAN DIEGO: [01:03:20] Hi, Jay, this is Chris Carter in San Diego. Been a while since I made a comment. I enjoyed your show about the myths of American history and culture. I'd like to focus on your comment at the end of the program about media coverage and blind spots.

I believe it's quite true that there are left and right media bubbles, and they give almost a polar opposite view of the state of things in our country and the world. I think the left does focus more on domestic policy and that the right focus is more on foreign policy. A lot of those differences would be due, of course, to the influence of international corporations whose owners benefit from profit driven by seeking the lowest possible overhead at the expense of human rights.

I have been a rabid progressive since my teenage years, and I'm 70 years old now. When I was younger, I tended to see the struggle in terms of fairness and justice in domestic policies. But as I grew older, and especially now, I became more aware of the world and the position of the United States in it. For example, seems like everyone on the left nowadays is aware of the CIA's meddling and interference and military action in the world governments, especially in South America.

One of the reasons why I am still rabidly progressive is that I would like to see US domestic policies present to the world a better example of how a society could operate on a set of ethical beliefs. My emphasis in this comment is on the setting the example, rather than simply establishing sane domestic policies.

A kind of humane domestic policy would radiate into the world, I think. Take just one example: how the US is treating Venezuela. The US government currently seems bent on regime change in that country. But if the US treated the Venezuela nation with kindness and humanity, rather than choking the life out of a government that doesn't like because of ideological differences, Venezuela would at least have a chance to get its own house in order without the current cruelty of sanctions.

I see and I've always seen the struggle between profit, which is driven by greed, and compassion, which is driven by love. I have no idea what the answer is to this, but I wanted to give you my perspective. Thank you for your work, Jay.

Thoughts on right-wing vs left-wing anarchism - Alex

VOICEDMAILER: ALEX: [01:06:48] Hello Jay! This is Alex. Apparently I'm quickly becoming a regular commenter. Your mention of two of the Michigan terrorists' supposed anarchist beliefs unfortunately follows most of the news coverage I've seen in that it lacks a nuanced understanding of the term and conflates political opposites as if they were indistinguishable. This is not a personal attack; that's actually a common mistake that I'll assume is due to a lack of familiarity with the ideas of anarchism.

Without getting too deep in the weeds, it's enough to mention that there are both left-wing and right-wing takes on "anarchy." The left-wing approach has much in common with varieties of socialism, specifically democratic socialism. It is heavily influenced by Marxist thinkers like Bakunin, Emma Goldman, Foucault, christian anarchists like Tolstoy and more recently Murray Bookchin and David Graeber. It is big on social justice, feminism, personal freedom, and community. An example of this type of thinking in action is the Food Not Bombs collective who distribute meals throughout American cities.

The right-wing variety of anarchism, like some other right-wing ideologies, is a confusing mishmash of contradictory ideas, neo-feudalism, and thinly veiled, repackaged anti-semitic

conspiracy theories. It is big on aggressive masculinity, violence, anti-PC "edgyness", and the "castle doctrine". If left-wing anarchism is somewhat comparable to socialism, one could say that right-wing anarchism is somewhat comparable to modern American libertarianism. Its main wellsprings of thought come from reactionary economists like Ludwig von Mises and pseudo-philosophers like Ayn Rand. They sometimes refer to themselves as "anarcho-capitalists." Right wing "anarchists" are really only anti-government in the same way that Timothy McVeigh was anti-government: they want the government to leave them alone and to hurt the people they don't like.

It's easy to get confused when these issues are not explored in any detail by journalistic outlets, but from what I've seen of the videos posted by one of the terrorists, he seems like he fits pretty easily into the right-wing, anarcho-capitalist, Timothy McVeigh mold rather than the Food Not Bombs mutual aid mold.

To simply describe them both as "anarchist" and imply a connection between them is kind of like saying that Martin Luther King Jr. and the Westboro Baptist Church are interchangeable because they are both Protestant Christians.

I don't expect this level of nuance from regular journalistic outlets, but I thought maybe your other listeners could benefit from this quick introduction. Also, I realize that my brief rundown of anarchist influences is completely Euro-American. This, of course, reflects my own cultural biases and experience. There have been vast contributions to the political philosophy by Indigenous and African practices which are especially prominent in the application of restorative justice.

Best Wishes

Fighting for legitimacy - Dave from Olympia, WA

VOICEMAILER: DAVE FROM OLYMPIA, WA: [01:09:28] Hi, Jay!, it's Dave from Olympia. I just listened to the RBG episode. Your commentary at the end was very thought-provoking about the need for government legitimacy moreso than, you know, any sort of policy prescription. It gets said a lot that we're fighting for the essence of democracy, and we are, but usually that's not followed up with what that means, that the underpinnings of legitimate, democratic institutions are respected by the people that are governed by that institution is what we're fighting for.

It made me think about the concept of "mos maiorum," the glue that held the Roman Republic together when it was still a republic. It was kind of a lot of agreed-upon but not strictly letter-of-the-law things that everybody knew. Everybody knew this is how it works. Consuls can do this and that. Well, technically, it doesn't say that, and so, you know, Marius and Sulla and Caesar and Pompey all pushed and prodded the system out of shape because it was based on these set of practices that everyone agreed to. And once people, you know, a certain group of people stopped agreeing to them and were using the system in a way that they could get what they wanted without essentially playing by the rules that everyone else agreed to in an unspoken and unwritten way, the whole thing eventually broke down.

Boy, the scope of the stuff that you're describing, the changes, it makes me, I don't know, just remember and realize how old and decrepit our Constitution is. We're certainly not the

first constitutional government, but we're one of the first, and the original British constitution didn't last, and I think the Dutch constitution might be older, but I don't know if that constitution is still functioning or not. But a parallel would be when the country came into existence, yeah, deals had to get cut for the United States to become a country. You know, the smaller states wouldn't have joined unless the electoral college was put in place and the three-fifths compromise. There were some bad -- maybe in retrospect, they had to give some sort of deal to get everyone to get on board. But we can do better than that today. But it's such an old system and people have -- you know, the human species has learned from the experience that the United States has demonstrated. And there are better, fairer, smarter, more legitimate ways of governing nowadays. In a lot of ways, it's an old system that's been patched and patched and patched. It's as if we're a modern computer still running on a version of DOS. We've had several security patches and updates and changes, but it is still, at its core, DOS. It's an old way of thinking about governing that frankly doesn't trust the people with power. They don't want the people to have control of the government because, you know, we don't trust them. They're not who we want to be in charge.

And you're right. There needs to be broad, sweeping change to a vast number of institutions to restore a sense of legitimacy to the end of the line government in a lot of the ways that . . . The Constitution gets a lot of, you know, rah, rah, 4th-of-July-speech, flag-waving deference and love, but the actual nuts and bolts of the Constitution are super clunky and yeah, a real fundamental, thoroughgoing review and update is probably in order if the United States is going to continue to be a functioning democracy for the next 50 years.

So, yeah, strong agreement, maybe some interesting thoughts in parallel.

As always, really enjoying the shows. Thank you so much. Stay awesome.

Final comments on the dangers and paranoia that come with illegitimate power

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:14:29] Thanks for listening to everyone. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show. Thanks to the monosyllabic transcriptionist trio Ben, Dan, and Ken for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets and activism segments. And, thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave it a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at (202) 999-3991, or write me a message to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

And now because we've accidentally stumbled into a conversation about legitimacy, I wrote these notes about desperation for legitimacy. And so this is the flip side of the coin. I started the conversation and Dave was doubling down on the importance of having a system that is built for legitimacy, but of course human history in the entire world is strewn with instances of illegitimate political power systems. And the most obvious, the most prevalent in our minds and sort of the most recent is kings. Right? And it is so obviously illegitimate, I mean you have to have mass something basically akin to hypnosis to convince everyone collectively that a king is a legitimate system of government. And so what practically always happens is you have these people in positions of enormous power, put there illegitimately by

circumstances and power dynamics, and all of that, but they know that their power is illegitimate and that if someone could come along and overthrow them by force, well then, that person would be the new, "legitimate ruler".

And, and so there's this deep, deep sense of paranoia that comes with that kind of territory. And this was really driven home for me a while back, maybe members know, I can't remember if I talked about it on the main show, but I talked about a trip to Scotland and going up into the Highlands where they have castles and all that sort of stuff. And so, going way back to that trip, I went to this castle in Scotland and the whole thing, well, not the whole thing, but a big chunk of this castle, is painted gold. Not literally gold, but it's like yellow.

So in addition, that was the most explicit example of this trend that you would see mentioned over and over again, the building of palaces, the projecting of wealth, the highlighting of your lineage. Because by the rules of kingdom, your lineage is where your legitimacy stems from. And so there are all these things done, this one king deciding to paint his castle gold to project wealth was just sort of the most ostentatious version of it, but all of these things stem from paranoia and they stem from this deep seated knowledge that they are illegitimate, that they don't really deserve what they have. They don't really deserve to serve their position of power. They came to it by accident, not through any action, certainly not through a collective showing of the will of the people or anything like that.

And the comparison between that archetype of a king and Donald Trump is so starkly obvious it's sort of frightening. This desperation for legitimacy is exactly why Trump has always been obsessed with the electoral map. That's why, if you recall, the stories for at least the first couple of years in office, he would show people, sort of apropos of nothing, "have you seen that electoral victory map?" because he won all those States that don't have any people in them. And this is why he harped on and on about the crowd size at the inauguration, and always wanted to have military parades. And basically what he's been reduced to is, well, he can throw himself a rally, that's what he can actually succeed at doing. And all of these things stem from that same sense that would tell a king in another era, "maybe I should paint my castle gold. Maybe that'll convince some people that I deserve to be where I am. Have you seen my electoral college map?"

And then the one that's the starkest comparison, maybe, is the highlighting of the importance of lineage. Now, of course, Trump's lineage goes nowhere. It's just, he got rich from his father who was rich by being a racist slumlord, but he absolutely wanted to begin a lineage. The story came out sort of recently, and it was one of those stories that I felt like I already knew, like, "didn't I already know this story?" that he wanted Ivanka to be his vice president and what he would love more than anything is for all of his kids to be the next presidents after him. And a lot of his followers, at least some of his followers, are pretty on board with that. And there are shirts you can buy with, Ivanka 2024 and 2028 and so on down through Baron, I guess.

And so, all of this comes back to legitimacy and trying to conjure fake legitimacy where it doesn't actually exist. Going back to royalty, even with all of the ordained by God nonsense, everyone sorta knows it's an illegitimate system of government. This isn't news to people living in our time. Good for us, we figured out that governments derive their legitimacy from the will of the governed and perhaps the most concise way to say it is that minority rule in

any fashion lacks legitimacy similar to an unelected king and they suffer from the same kind of instability. Kingdoms are thought of as this sort of stable governing system, this stark hierarchical, nothing moves or changes, but when you scratch beneath the surface, the people in charge the the kings and their advisors are constantly paranoid of how to hold onto their own power and the potential of being overthrown by someone nearby and maybe then having to attack preemptively and so on and so on. So to sort of hide their illegitimacy, kings build their golden castles and palaces and monuments to project a false sense of legitimacy. And this is where I would joke that instead of a golden castle, Trump built himself a golden toilet, but according to Snopes that story isn't actually true. I mean, it definitely rings of truthiness, but apparently not.

But in real life, Trump is, without exaggeration, the least legitimately elected president in our lifetimes. And we have the misfortune that he also happens to be incredibly thin skinned and particularly susceptible to that criticism, which brings out his paranoia more than what would already be there. And that is unquestionably the source of much of his incredibly erratic behavior. I mean, don't get me wrong, I think that he would be erratic under any circumstances, but if you were legitimately elected and genuinely popular, I think that he would be less of a loose cannon, but instead he is a paranoid husk of a person in the throws of panic, trying desperately to project legitimacy where none exists. Because frankly, the only way to not be paranoid like that is to come to power through a legitimate process and be genuinely popular by doing what the majority of people want. It's really not complicated, but unfortunately, those aren't options for Donald Trump. He can't do those things. And therefore he has nowhere to go but deeper into his paranoia, which causes him to be more and more erratic, which is shaking the legitimacy of our entire system to its foundation, which as explained previously was already on shaky ground. I mean, he's only president because we have a system that is itself illegitimate with giant gaping holes in it. So, he is exposing all of the illegitimacy in all of the ways, only making it more and more starkly clear that we need to make the sort of fundamental changes that both Dave from Olympia and I are in favor of.

As always keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991, or by emailing me at jay@bestoftheleft.com. That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support as that is absolutely how the program survives. Of course everyone can support the show just by telling everyone you know about it and leaving us glowing reviews on Apple Podcasts and Facebook to help others find the show. For details on the show itself including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes on the blog and likely right on the device you're using to listen. So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, D.C., my name is Jay!, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to you twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.